

To: R1 ALLEPANE EPA Employees Only[R1_ALLEPANEEPAONLY@epa.gov]
From: Szaro, Deb
Sent: Wed 8/19/2015 4:53:28 PM
Subject: Gold King Mine Release

Good Afternoon,

There has been a lot of negative press about EPA regarding the Gold King Mine release. I imagine that all of you have fielded numerous questions from family and friends as I have. I respond that EPA successfully protects public health and the environment across the nation day-in and day-out thanks to the hard work and dedication of all the EPA staff in the Regions. This is especially true in New England, and I am proud of the work that we do and am grateful that I get to work with such talented colleagues every day!

To make sure that you have the most current information, I thought that I would update you on the status of the Gold King Mine response and Region 1's involvement. As you all surely know, for the last two weeks EPA has been at the center of a major emergency response event at the Gold King Mine Site near Silverton, Colorado that has impacted Regions 8, 6 and 9. Thousands of abandoned mines exist throughout the west, including over 23,000 in Colorado alone. EPA routinely works with our state and tribal partners to clean up these sites. This spill occurred when one of our contracting teams was using heavy equipment to enter the Gold King Mine, a long inactive mine undergoing EPA Removal Program investigation. They were beginning the process of pumping and treating the contaminated water contained inside the mine itself. The catastrophic failure of a bulkhead wall in the mine resulted in the release of three million gallons of acidic mine water that was contaminated with heavy metals. This has affected the Animas River which is part of the Colorado River Basin. In response to this unfortunate accident, EPA has deployed employees from across the agency, with other partner agencies assisting.

Currently, EPA is taking steps to capture and treat the continuing discharge at the Gold King Mine, addressing the risk of additional downstream impacts. EPA On Scene Coordinators (OSCs) and contractors are treating water by lowering acidity levels and removing dissolved metals. Teams are collecting surface water, ground water and drinking water samples throughout the affected area. Working with local and tribal officials, EPA is providing alternative water supplies and free water quality testing for domestic drinking water wells along the river. We have also stood up a Unified Command center in Durango, as well as the Emergency Operations Center at EPA headquarters in DC to ensure a coordinated response in conjunction with tribal, local, state and federal officials.

To date, three people from Region 1 have been deployed to the incident. OSC Dan Burgo is helping with the management of the incredible volume of environmental data by serving as the Data Unit Leader in the Unified Command. Tony Honnellio has been deployed to serve in a vital role as a member of the Critical Incident Stress Management team to help manage the pressure that this incident has brought to bear on EPA personnel in the area. Also, Nancy Grantham is serving in the Unified Command as the leader of the Public Information Office,

ensuring that timely and accurate information about ongoing response efforts is communicated to the media and the public. Our sincerest thanks go to all three of them! At this time, there are no requests for additional assistance to the incident. However, this may change as the scope of the response continues to evolve. If additional requests are received, our OSRR team may reach out to the members of the Response Support Corps and their managers to fill those positions.

Although not the magnitude of the mining work out West, OSRR is currently working on a number of mining sites in New England. Our team has carefully evaluated the site-specific conditions and the nature of the ongoing work, and has determined that scheduled work should continue at our sites.

Once again, thank you for all your hard work and dedication to protecting public health and the environment in New England and beyond!

Deb